



Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment **ADDENDUM**

Region 13

(Clinton, Jefferson, Marion, & Washington
Counties)



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Introduction

In 2021, the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Funding issued a report with findings that highlighted the inequities in ECEC funding in Illinois and the need to create a better statewide infrastructure to support ECEC professionals, expand services and programs for families and caregivers, and increase enrollment in ECEC programs. The report focused on the importance of addressing racial inequities and the need to include local voices in the conversation funders and decisionmakers were having about ECEC.

The experiences and knowledge families, caregivers, and Early Childhood professionals gain while navigating the complexities of the State's ECEC system is valuable, and understanding their lived experience in the local context is vital for decisionmakers to ensure communities have access to the programs, services, and supports they need. To this end, Birth to Five Illinois was created to harness family and caregiver voices in ECEC and serve as a bridge between the communities and policymakers so family, caregiver, and professional experiences can guide the decisions made to expand or enhance services across the State.

Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessments

Between August 2022 and May 2023, Regional Teams throughout the State met with their local Action Council and Family Council to talk about Early Childhood data and hear about their experiences with ECEC programs and services. They also conducted focus groups, interviews, held community listening sessions, and conducted surveys to gather additional feedback from caregivers, ECEC professionals, and priority populations in their Region. A community report, the Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment, was completed in June 2023. However, recognizing that not all community members had a chance to provide their feedback on data or share their experiences in the original Regional Needs Assessment, additional feedback was collected through community events and meetings, and this Addendum was created to complement the existing report. The new information provided by community members, agencies, organizations, and other community stakeholders is listed below.

Slot Gap

The Regional Office of Education #13 has been awarded a grant through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to add 100 slots for Preschool for All Expansion (PFA-E). This funding will adjust the available slots for PFA-E in the Region from 60 to 160. Additionally, they were awarded a second grant through ISBE to add 250 slots for Prevention Initiative (PI) Birth to Three Home Visiting. This funding will adjust the available slots for PI in the Region from 26 to 276.

Parent/Family/Caregiver Voice

Feedback from caregivers indicated that there are little to no options for child care for children with disabilities in all four counties of the Region. Nor are there enough Early Intervention (EI) providers to serve families, leading to long waitlists and/or limited availability of therapists and providers.

“I have a 5-year-old child with CP (cerebral palsy). I've had people babysit her before and they were supposed to be getting paid through the DCFS [the Department of Children and Family Services] because she is a foster child. They aren't getting paid, so they all quit. They told me it takes a while for the checks to start coming but they can't wait, and they think it's my fault. I called every place they gave me on a list and asked if they had room for her at their daycare and everyone tells me that they are full or that they won't take her because they can't take care of her. I see these places put on Facebook that they have openings they just don't want her because she is extra work. No one will help.” - Parent (Marion County)

Next Steps

As Regional Teams continue their conversations with caregivers, ECEC professionals, and community stakeholders, their stories and experiences with ECEC programs and services will be recorded and shared with state and local agencies, legislators, funders, and decisionmakers. We hope our work will contribute to reimagining an Early Childhood system that is more equitable for all families and support the incredible work ECEC professionals do every day.